WEYMER CREEK PROVINCIAL PARK

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN

February 2003

Approved by:

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Date: March 11, 2003

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Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Primary Role
The **primary** role of Weymer Creek Park is to protect an undisturbed and unique high elevation karst/cave landscape and associated ecosystems. The park is one of a number of karst/cave systems on Vancouver Island, which has the bulk of British Columbia's cave/karst topography. Six cave systems have been protected ranging from Horne Lake Caves which have been highly explored to Clayoquot Plateau where exploration has been limited to a few caves. The Weymer system is quite large and has the second longest and deepest system of interconnected caves on Vancouver Island, but only a portion of it has been protected. The park also includes significant palaeontological/zoological sites, in particular sediment deposits and bones of rodents, birds, bear, deer and marmot dated to 1,300 years old. To date, the caves in the park have been explored and mapped but recreation use is limited given the rare and endangered species in the cave and the sensitive nature of the karst formations. There are no facilities in this undeveloped and remote park.

Secondary Role
The **secondary** role is to protect the rare and endangered species that utilize the caves as habitat. Weymer Creek Park contains the only known limestone cave bat hibernaculum on Vancouver Island, and supports the highest species diversity of any hibernaculum in British Columbia with six bat species, including one species that is endangered and rated as Special Concern by COSEWIC. The bats use the caves for roosting and hibernating as well as for nurseries to raise their young.

Tertiary Role
The **tertiary** role is to protect the natural values associated with the temperate rainforest on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Much of this type of forest has been impacted through forestry and is no longer in its natural state. By protecting the coastal fringe, the park protects two under-represented biogeoclimatic variants – Coastal Western Hemlock vm1 and vm2 – as well as an old growth forest.

Weymer Creek Park is home to several resident black bears and is frequented by elk.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Levels of use and impacts on the cave environment	➢ Exercise the precautionary principle and undertake a management plan. ➢ Define and maintain existing levels of recreational use during seasons outside of bat hibernation period. ➢ Undertake assessment to determine carrying capacity of the caves. ➢ Work with BC Speleological Federation to adopt a "Code of Conduct" with regards to karst resources.
Safety of caves	➢ Work with BC Cave Rescue to adopt safety standards for all users.

	➢ Develop public information regarding safety precautions for cave use.
Disturbance of hibernating endangered species by cave explorers	➢ Undertake analysis to protect hibernating species. Consider closures to address issue.
Impact of adjacent land use on park values and on cave system outside the park	➢ Work with Ministry of Forests and Western Forest Products to manage adjacent areas to protect cave/karst features. ➢ Ensure appropriate hydrology, windthrow and recharge area testing has been completed before harvesting proceeds.
Lack of knowledge of cultural values	➢ Undertake cultural inventory and traditional use study of whole park in conjunction with First Nations.

Zoning

Special Feature Zone – covers entire park (316 ha) in recognition of the caves and karst topography. The objective of this zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural features, resources, or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

Conservation

Representation - ecosection	☒	Contributes minimally (0.16%) to the representation of the Windward Island Mountains Ecosection. This ecosection is well represented in the protected areas system at 17.42%.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	☒	Contributes very minimally to the representation of two under-represented variants: CWHvm1 – only 7.0% protected CWHvm2 – only 8.7% protected. Weymer Creek Park contributes only 0.04% and 0.16% to the overall representation of CWHvm1 and CWHvm2 respectively, but is important as it protects old growth remnants of these highly modified ecosystems. Very minimal contribution (0.03%) to the representation of MHmm1, which is well represented in the protected areas system (16%).
Special Features	☒	Karst cave features; bat species (6); old growth; unique ecosystems
Rare/Endangered Values	☒	*Red-listed* bat Keen's long eared myotis; *blue-listed* plant corrupt spleenwort
Scientific/Research Opportunities	☒	Bat research

Recreation

Representation		
backcountry	☐	Not Applicable
destination	☒	High potential for caving
travel corridor	☐	Not Applicable
local recreation	☐	Not Applicable
Special Opportunities	☒	Caving potential for experienced users
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	☒	Natural values - offsite

Cultural Heritage

Representation	☐	Unknown values
Special Feature	☐	Possible use of caves by First Nations as shelter in animal processing activities

Other Management Considerations

Other Designations	☐	Not Applicable
Relationship to other PAs	☒	Part of a system of cave/karst protected areas on Vancouver Island
Co-operative Management Arrangements	☐	Not Applicable
Partnerships	☐	Not Applicable
Vulnerability	☒	Impacts of logging adjacent to park that is occurring in the karst landscape, which is interconnected with the caves in the park; levels of use; small size of park puts the values at risk
Relationship to other Strategies	☒	Recommended for protection in the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan Goal 2

Area: 316 hectares

Date of establishment: April 30, 1996

Zoning Map - Weymer Creek Provincial Park

Projection: Albers Equal Areas
Datum: NAD83

Special Feature
Protected Area Boundary

0 500
m

Produced in Feb 2003 for Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection by MSRM, Decision Support Services

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